



**4910-06-P**

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **Federal Railroad Administration**

#### **Notice of Funding Opportunity for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements**

**AGENCY:** Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

**ACTION:** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO or notice).

---

**SUMMARY:** This notice details the application requirements and procedures to obtain grant funding for eligible projects under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. CRISI Program funding under this notice is provided by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (2020 Appropriation). The opportunities described in this notice are made available under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 20.325, “Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements.”

**DATES:** Applications for funding under this solicitation are due no later than 5:00 p.m. ET, [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. Applications received after 5:00 p.m. ET on [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] will not be considered for funding. Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. See Section D of this notice for additional information on the application process.

**ADDRESSES:** Applications must be submitted via [www.Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). Only applicants who comply with all submission requirements described in this notice and submit

applications through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) will be eligible for award. For any supporting application materials that an applicant is unable to submit via [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) (such as oversized engineering drawings), an applicant may submit an original and two (2) copies to Ms. Frances Bourne, Office of Policy and Planning, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Room W38-207, Washington, DC 20590. However, due to delays caused by enhanced screening of mail delivered via the U.S. Postal Service, applicants are advised to use other means of conveyance (such as courier service) to assure timely receipt of materials before the application deadline.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further project or program-related information in this notice, please contact Ms. Frances Bourne, Office of Policy and Planning, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Room W38-207, Washington, DC 20590; email: [frances.bourne@dot.gov](mailto:frances.bourne@dot.gov); phone: 202-493-6366.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Notice to applicants:** FRA recommends that applicants read this notice in its entirety prior to preparing application materials. Definitions of key terms used throughout the NOFO are provided in Section A(2) below. These key terms are capitalized throughout the NOFO. There are several administrative prerequisites and specific eligibility requirements described herein with which applicants must comply. Additionally, applicants should note that the required Project Narrative component of the application package may not exceed 25 pages in length.

**Table of Contents:**

A. Program Description

- B. Federal Award Information
- C. Eligibility Information
- D. Application and Submission Information
- E. Application Review Information
- F. Federal Award Administration Information
- G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts
- H. Other Information

## **A. Program Description**

### **1. Overview**

This program leverages private, state and local investments to support safety enhancements and general improvements to infrastructure for both intercity passenger and freight railroads. The U.S. rail network is central to the success of the American economy, carrying more than 1.8 billion tons of freight valued at more than \$830 billion annually, and over 32.5 million passengers on Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation services. Both services primarily operate over privately-owned and maintained infrastructure, allowing for strong private, capital market investment that generates public benefit, including public-private partnerships among other models.

A strong transportation network is critical to the functioning and growth of the American economy. The nation's industry depends on the transportation network to move the goods that it produces, and facilitate the movements of the workers who are responsible for that production. When the nation's highways, railways, and ports function well, that infrastructure connects people to jobs, increases the efficiency of

delivering goods and thereby cuts the costs of doing business, reduces the burden of commuting, and improves overall well-being.

Rural transportation networks play a vital role in supporting our national economic vitality. Addressing the deteriorating conditions and disproportionately high fatality rates on our rural transportation infrastructure is of critical interest to DOT, as rural transportation networks face unique challenges in safety, infrastructure condition, and passenger and freight usage. Consistent with the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (R.O.U.T.E.S.) Initiative, DOT will consider how the project will address the challenges faced by rural areas.

DOT is committed to addressing the unmet transportation infrastructure needs of rural areas. Underinvestment in rural transportation systems has allowed a slow and steady decline in the transportation routes that connect rural American communities to each other and to the rest of the country, fraying the fabric of American interconnectivity. A majority of the nation's rail route miles are in rural America. Investment is necessary to grow rural economies, facilitate freight movement, improve access to reliable and affordable transportation options and enhance access to healthcare and safety for residents.

DOT also recognizes the importance of applying life cycle asset management principles throughout America's infrastructure. It is important for rail infrastructure owners and operators, as well as those who may apply on their behalf, to plan for the maintenance and replacement of assets and the associated costs.

Congress authorized this grant program for the Secretary to invest in a wide range of projects within the United States to improve railroad safety, efficiency, and reliability;

mitigate congestion at both intercity passenger and freight rail chokepoints; enhance multi-modal connections; and lead to new or substantially improved intercity passenger rail transportation corridors. Rail safety projects include, but are not limited to, grade crossing enhancements, rail line relocations and improvements, and deployment of railroad safety technology. Eligible work also includes: regional rail and corridor planning, environmental analyses, and research, workforce development, and training. The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for the competitive CRISI Program funding provided in the 2020 Appropriation. The CRISI Program is authorized under Section 11301 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Public Law 114-94 (2015); 49 U.S.C. 22907 and funds made available in this NOFO are provided in the 2020 Appropriation.

## **2. Definitions of Key Terms**

- a. "Benefit-Cost Analysis" (or "Cost-Benefit Analysis") is a systematic, data driven, and transparent analysis comparing monetized project benefits and costs, using a no-build baseline and properly discounted present values, including concise documentation of the assumptions and methodology used to produce the analysis; a description of the baseline, data sources used to project outcomes, and values of key input parameters; basis of modeling including spreadsheets, technical memos, etc.; and presentation of the calculations in sufficient detail and transparency to allow the analysis to be reproduced and for sensitivity of results evaluated by FRA. Please refer to the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs prior to preparing a BCA at <https://www.transportation.gov/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>. In addition, please also refer to the BCA FAQs on FRA's

website for rail specific examples of how to apply the BCA Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs to CRISI applications.

- b. “Capital Project” means a project for: acquiring, constructing, improving, or inspecting rail equipment, track and track structures, or a rail facility; expenses incidental to the acquisition or construction including pre-construction activities (such as designing, engineering, location surveying, mapping, acquiring rights-of-way) and related relocation costs, environmental studies, and all work necessary for FRA to approve the project under the National Environmental Policy Act; highway-rail grade crossing improvements; communication and signalization improvements; and rehabilitating, remanufacturing or overhauling rail rolling stock and facilities.<sup>1</sup>
- c. “Construction” means the production of fixed works and structures or substantial alterations to such structures or land and associated costs.
- d. “Final Design (FD)” means design activities following Preliminary Engineering, and at a minimum, includes the preparation of final Construction plans, detailed specifications, and estimates sufficiently detailed to inform project stakeholders (designers, reviewers, contractors, suppliers, etc.) of the actions required to advance the project from design through completion of Construction.
- e. “Improvement” means repair or enhancement to existing rail infrastructure, or Construction of new rail infrastructure, that results in efficiency of the rail system and the safety of those affected by the system.

---

<sup>1</sup> For any project that includes purchasing Intercity Passenger Rail equipment, applicants are encouraged to use a standardized approach to the procurement of passenger rail equipment, such as the specifications developed by the Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee or a similar uniform process.

- f. “Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation” means rail passenger transportation, except commuter rail passenger transportation. See 49 U.S.C. 22901(3). In this notice, “Intercity Passenger Rail Service” and “Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation” are equivalent terms to “Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation.”
- g. “National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)” is a Federal law that requires Federal agencies to analyze and document the environmental impacts of a proposed action in consultation with appropriate Federal, state, and local authorities, and with the public. NEPA classes of action include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Environmental Analysis (EA) or Categorical Exclusion (CE). The NEPA class of action depends on the nature of the proposed action, its complexity, and the potential impacts. For purposes of this NOFO, NEPA also includes all related Federal laws and regulations including the Clean Air Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additional information regarding FRA’s environmental processes and requirements are located at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/environment>.
- h. “Planning” means activities that support the development of a state or regional rail plan or a corridor service development plan. Project-specific (e.g., rail station or port improvements) planning is not eligible.
- i. “Positive Train Control (PTC) system” is defined by 49 CFR 270.5 to mean a system designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and the movement of a train through a switch left in the wrong position, as described in 49 CFR part 236, subpart I.

- j. “Preliminary Engineering (PE)” means engineering design to: (1) define a project, including identification of all environmental impacts, design of all critical project elements at a level sufficient to assure reliable cost estimates and schedules, (2) complete project management and financial plans, and (3) identify procurement requirements and strategies. The PE development process starts with specific project design alternatives that allow for the assessment of a range of rail improvements, specific alignments, and project designs. PE generally occurs concurrently with NEPA and related analyses, and prior to FD and Construction.
- k. “Rail Carrier” means a person providing common carrier railroad transportation for compensation, but does not include street, suburban, or interurban electric railways not operated as part of the general system of rail transportation. See 49 U.S.C. 10102(5).
- l. “Relocation” is defined to mean moving a rail line vertically or laterally to a new location. Vertical Relocation refers to raising above the current ground level or sinking below the current ground level of a rail line. Lateral Relocation refers to moving a rail line horizontally to a new location.
- m. “Rural Project” means a project in which all or the majority of the project (determined by the geographic location or locations where the majority of the project funds will be spent) is located in a Rural Area.
- n. “Rural Area” is defined in 49 U.S.C. 22907(g)(2) to mean any area not in an urbanized area as defined by the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau defines

Urbanized Area (UA) as an area with a population of 50,000 or more people.<sup>2</sup>

Updated lists of UAs as defined by the Census Bureau are available on the Census Bureau website at

[http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC\\_RefMap/ua/](http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/ua/).

## **B. Federal Award Information**

### **1. Available Award Amount**

The total funding available for awards under this NOFO is \$311,772,500. Should additional CRISI funds become available after the release of this NOFO, FRA may elect to award such additional funds to applications received under this NOFO.

Of the \$325,000,000 made available in the 2020 Appropriation, at least 25 percent, or \$81,250,000 will be made available for Rural Projects as required by 49 U.S.C. 22907 and \$45 million will be made available for projects eligible under 49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(2) that require the acquisition of rights-of-way, track, or track structure projects to support the development of new intercity passenger rail service routes. Additionally, \$9,977,500 has been set aside for Special Transportation Circumstances, which will be made available under a separate NOFO. FRA will also set aside \$3,250,000 for award and program oversight.

### **2. Award Size**

There are no minimum or maximum dollar thresholds for awards. FRA anticipates making multiple awards with the available funding. FRA may not be able to award grants to all eligible applications, nor even to all applications that meet or exceed the stated evaluation criteria (see Section E, Application Review Information). Projects may require

---

<sup>2</sup> See 74 FR 53030, 53043 (August 24, 2011) *available at* <https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/fedreg/fedregv76n164.pdf>

more funding than is available. FRA encourages applicants to propose projects or components of projects that have operational independence and that can be completed and implemented with CRISI funding as a part of the total project cost together with other, non-Federal sources.

FRA strongly encourages applicants to identify and include other state, local, public, or private funding or financing to support the proposed project in order to maximize competitiveness.

### **3. Award Type**

FRA will make awards for projects selected under this notice through grant agreements and/or cooperative agreements. Grant agreements are used when FRA does not expect to have substantial Federal involvement in carrying out the funded activity. Cooperative agreements allow for substantial Federal involvement in carrying out the agreed upon investment, including technical assistance, review of interim work products, and increased program oversight. The funding provided under this NOFO will be made available to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Applicants must certify that their expenditures are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary to the approved project before seeking reimbursement from FRA. Additionally, the grantee is expected to expend matching funds at the required percentage concurrent with Federal funds throughout the life of the project. See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057>. This template is subject to revision.

### **4. Concurrent Applications**

DOT and FRA may be concurrently soliciting applications for transportation infrastructure projects for several financial assistance programs, and applicants may

submit applications requesting funding for a particular project to one or more of these programs. In the application for CRISI Program funding under this NOFO, applicants must indicate other programs, including other CRISI NOFOs, to which they submitted or plan to submit an application for funding the entire project or certain project components, as well as highlight new or revised information in the application responsive to this NOFO that differs from the application(s) for other Federal financial assistance programs or other CRISI NOFOs.

### **C. Eligibility Information**

This section of the notice explains applicant eligibility, cost sharing and matching requirements, project eligibility, and project component operational independence.

Applications that do not meet the requirements in this section will be ineligible for funding. Instructions for submitting eligibility information to FRA are detailed in Section D of this NOFO.

#### **1. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible applicants for all project types permitted under this notice:

- a. A State;
- b. A group of States;
- c. An Interstate Compact;
- d. A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more States;<sup>3</sup>
- e. A political subdivision of a State;

---

<sup>3</sup> See Section D(2)(a)(iv) for supporting documentation required to demonstrate eligibility under this eligibility category.

- f. Amtrak or another Rail Carrier that provides Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation (as defined in 49 U.S.C. 24102);
- g. A Class II railroad or Class III railroad (as those terms are defined in 49 U.S.C. 20102) or a holding company of a Class II or III railroad;
- h. Any Rail Carrier or rail equipment manufacturer in partnership with at least one of the entities described in paragraph (a) through (e);<sup>4</sup>
- i. The Transportation Research Board together with any entity with which it contracts in the development of rail-related research, including cooperative research programs;
- j. A University transportation center engaged in rail-related research; or
- k. A non-profit labor organization representing a class or craft of employees of Rail Carriers or Rail Carrier contractors.

Applications must identify an eligible applicant as the lead applicant. The lead applicant serves as the primary point of contact for the application, and if selected, as the grantee of the CRISI Program grant award. Eligible applicants may reference entities that are not eligible applicants in an application as a project partner.

## **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

The Federal share of total costs for projects funded under this notice will not exceed 80 percent though FRA will provide selection preference to applications where the proposed Federal share of total project costs is 50 percent or less. The estimated total cost of a project must be based on the best available information, including engineering studies, studies of economic feasibility, environmental analyses, and information on the expected use of equipment and/or facilities. Additionally, in preparing estimates of total

---

<sup>4</sup> See Section D(2)(a)(iv) for supporting information required to demonstrate eligibility under this eligibility category.

project costs, applicants should refer to FRA’s cost estimate guidance documentation, “Capital Cost Estimating: Guidance for Project Sponsors,” which is available at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0926>.

The minimum 20 percent non-Federal match may be comprised of public sector (e.g., state or local) and/or private sector funding. FRA will not consider any Federal financial assistance<sup>5</sup> or any non-Federal funds already expended (or otherwise encumbered) toward the matching requirement, unless compliant with 2 CFR Part 200. FRA is limiting the first 20 percent of the non-Federal match to cash contributions only. Eligible in-kind contributions may be accepted for any non-Federal matching beyond the first 20 percent. In-kind contributions, including the donation of services, materials, and equipment, may be credited as a project cost, in a uniform manner consistent with 2 CFR 200.306. Moreover, FRA encourages applicants to broaden their funding table in applications. Non-federal shares consisting of funding from multiple sources (e.g., a state, county, railroad, and university contributing to a grade crossing improvement) to demonstrate broad participation and cost sharing from affected stakeholders, will be given preference.

Amtrak or another Rail Carrier may use ticket and other non-Federal revenues generated from its operations and other sources as matching funds. Applicants must identify the source(s) of its matching and other funds, and must clearly and distinctly reflect these funds as part of the total project cost.

Before applying, applicants should carefully review the principles for cost sharing or matching in 2 CFR 200.306. See Section D(2)(a)(iii) for required application

---

<sup>5</sup> See Section D(2)(a)(iii) for supporting information required to demonstrate eligibility of Federal funds for use as match.

information on non-Federal match and Section E for further discussion of FRA's consideration of matching funds in the review and selection process. FRA will approve pre-award costs consistent with 2 CFR 200.458, as applicable. See Section D(6). Cost sharing or matching may be used only for authorized Federal award purposes.

### **3. Other**

#### **a. Project Eligibility**

The following rail projects within the United States that improve the safety, efficiency, and/or reliability of passenger and/or freight rail transportation systems are eligible for funding under 49 U.S.C. 22907 and this NOFO:

- i. Deployment of railroad safety technology, including positive train control and rail integrity inspection systems.<sup>6</sup> PTC examples include: back office systems; wayside, communications and onboard hardware equipment; software; equipment installation; spectrum; any component, testing and training for the implementation of PTC systems; and interoperability. Maintenance and operating expenses incurred after a PTC system is placed in revenue service are ineligible. Railroad safety technology and rail integrity inspection system examples include: broken rail detection and warning systems; track intrusion systems; and hot box detectors, wheel impact load detectors, and other safety improvements.<sup>7</sup>
- ii. A capital project as defined in 49 U.S.C. 22901(2) relating to Intercity Passenger Rail Service, except that such projects are not required to be in

---

<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to the 2020 Appropriation, 49 U.S.C. 22905(f) shall not apply to projects for the implementation of positive train control systems, otherwise eligible under 49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(1).

<sup>7</sup> Only costs for FD and Construction project stages and forward are eligible within this project eligibility category.

a State rail plan under the CRISI Program. Examples include: acquisition, improvement, or rehabilitation of railroad equipment (locomotives and rolling stock); railroad infrastructure (grade crossings, catenary, and signals); and rail facilities (yards, passenger stations, or maintenance and repair shops). For any project that includes purchasing Intercity Passenger Rail equipment, applicants are encouraged to use a standardized approach to the procurement of passenger rail equipment, such as the specifications developed by the Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee or a similar uniform process.

- iii. A Capital Project necessary to address congestion challenges affecting rail service. Examples include: projects addressing congestion that increase rail capacity; add or upgrade the condition, clearances, and capacity of rail mainlines; enhance capacity and service with less conflict between freight and Intercity Passenger Rail; reduce delays and risks associated with highway-rail grade crossings; and provide more effective rail equipment.
- iv. A Capital Project necessary to reduce congestion and facilitate ridership growth in Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation along heavily traveled rail corridors. Examples include: projects addressing congestion that improve stations; increase rail capacity; reduce conflict between freight and Intercity Passenger Rail; reduce delays and risks associated with highway-rail grade crossings; and provide more effective rail equipment.
- v. A highway-rail grade crossing improvement project, including installation, repair, or improvement of grade separations, railroad crossing signals,

gates, and related technologies; highway traffic signalization; highway lighting and crossing approach signage; roadway improvements such as medians or other barriers; railroad crossing panels and surfaces; and safety engineering improvements to reduce risk in quiet zones or potential quiet zones.

- vi. A rail line Relocation and Improvement project. Examples include projects that: improve the route or structure of a rail line by replacing degraded track; enhance/relocate railroad switching operations; add or lengthen passing tracks to increase capacity; improve interlockings; and relocate rail lines to alleviate congestion, and eliminate frequent rail service interruptions.
- vii. A Capital Project to improve short-line or regional railroad infrastructure.
- viii. The preparation of regional rail and corridor service development plans and corresponding environmental analyses. (See the examples under Track 1 and 2 below in Subsections C(3)(b)(i)-(ii) as they apply to regional and corridor rail Planning.)
- ix. A project necessary to enhance multimodal connections or facilitate service integration between rail service and other modes, including between Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation and intercity bus service or commercial air service. Examples include: intermodal transportation facilities projects that encourage joint scheduling, ticketing, and/or baggage handling; freight rail intermodal connections; and rail projects improving access to ports.

- x. The development and implementation of a safety program or institute designed to improve rail safety. Examples include: employee training; and public safety outreach and education.
- xi. Any research that the Secretary considers necessary to advance any particular aspect of rail related capital, operations, or safety improvements.
- xii. Workforce development and training activities, coordinated to the extent practicable with the existing local training programs supported by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Education.<sup>8</sup>

Applicants that intend to charge indirect costs through the use of a negotiated indirect cost rate must have a current, signed, federal-approved indirect cost rate agreement.

Applicants that have never received a federally-approved indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs, which may be used indefinitely. This includes state and local governments that have never negotiated an indirect cost rate with the federal government and receive less than \$35 million in direct federal funding per year. Organizations that wish to negotiate an indirect cost rate should contact FRA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer at [FRA.CFO@dot.gov](mailto:FRA.CFO@dot.gov).

For a project that uses rights-of-way owned by a railroad, and the railroad is not the applicant, FRA requires that a written agreement exist between the applicant and the railroad regarding use and ownership consistent with 49 U.S.C. 22905(c)(1). This requirement is a condition to making a grant under the CRISI Program.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Section D.2.a.vi.(D) for required application information relevant to this eligibility category.

b. Project Tracks for Eligible Projects

Applicants are not limited in the number of projects for which they seek funding. FRA will not limit eligible projects from consideration for funding for planning, environmental, engineering, design, and construction elements of the same project in the same application. Applicants are allowed to include multiple phases of a project in the same application. However, depending on the project, applications for multiple phases of project development may not contain sufficient detail with regards to scope, schedule, or budget for all phases of the application to compete well in the application review process.<sup>9</sup>

An applicant must identify one or more of the following four tracks for an eligible project: Track 1 – Planning; Track 2 – PE/NEPA; Track 3 – FD/Construction; or Track 4 – Research, Safety Programs and Institutes.

i. Track 1 - Planning

Track 1 consists of eligible rail Planning projects. Examples include the technical analyses and associated environmental analyses that support the development of state rail plans, regional rail plans, and corridor service development plans, including: identification of alternatives, rail network Planning, market analysis, travel demand forecasting, revenue forecasting, railroad system design, railroad operations analysis and simulation, equipment fleet Planning, station and access analysis, conceptual

---

<sup>9</sup> The scope, schedule, and budget necessary to implement a project, as well as the definition of the project's potential benefits, are typically informed by the work conducted in prior phases of project development (e.g., the specific elements of an FD/Construction project and their cost estimates are developed and refined through PE.) The evaluation criteria for the CRISI Program (see Section E of this NOFO) considers the level of detail contained in the applicant's proposed scope of work and readiness for the project to be implemented.

engineering and capital programming, operating and maintenance cost forecasting, capital replacement and renewal analysis, and economic analysis. Project-specific (e.g., rail station or port improvements) planning is not an eligible Track 1 project.

ii. Track 2 - PE/NEPA

Track 2 consists of eligible PE/NEPA projects. PE examples include: PE drawings and specifications (scale drawings at the 30% design level, including track geometry as appropriate); design criteria, schematics and/or track charts that support the development of PE; and work that can be funded in conjunction with developing PE, such as operations modeling, surveying, project work/management plans, preliminary cost estimates, and preliminary project schedules. PE/NEPA projects funded under this NOFO must be sufficiently developed to support FD or Construction activities.

iii. Track 3 - FD/Construction

Track 3 consists of eligible projects for FD, Construction, and project implementation and deployment activities. Applicants must complete all necessary Planning, PE and NEPA requirements for FD/Construction projects. FD funded under this track must: resolve remaining uncertainties or risks associated with changes to design scope; address procurement processes; and update and refine plans for financing the project or program to reflect accurately the expected year-of-expenditure costs and

cash flow projections. Applicants selected for funding for

FD/Construction must demonstrate the following to FRA's satisfaction:

- (A) PE is completed for the proposed project, resulting in project designs that are reasonably expected to conform to all regulatory, safety, security, and other design requirements, including those under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- (B) NEPA is completed for the proposed project;
- (C) Signed agreements with key project partners, including infrastructure-owning entities; and
- (D) A project management plan is in-place for managing the implementation of the proposed project, including the management and mitigation of project risks.

FD examples include: drawings at the 100% Design Level, interim design drawings that support development (e.g., drawings at the 60% Design Level), project work/project management plan, cost estimates, project schedules, and right-of-way acquisition and relocation plans. Construction examples include: additions, improvements, replacements, renovations and/or repairs to track, bridge, station, rail yard, signal, and communication system infrastructure, or other railroad safety technology.

iv. Track 4 – Research, Safety Programs and Institutes (Non-Railroad Infrastructure)

Track 4 consists of projects not falling within Tracks 1-3 including workforce development activities, research, safety programs or institutes

designed to improve rail safety that clearly demonstrate the expected positive impact on rail safety. Sufficient detail must be provided on what the project will accomplish, as well as the applicant's capability to achieve the proposed outcomes. Examples include: initiatives for improving rail safety, training, public outreach, and education.

c. Project Component Operational Independence

If an applicant requests funding for a project that is a component or set of components of a larger project, the project component(s) must be attainable with the award amount, together with other funds as necessary, obtain operational independence, and must comply with all eligibility requirements described in Section C.

In addition, the component(s) must be capable of independent analysis and decision making, as determined by FRA, under NEPA (i.e., have independent utility, connect logical termini, if applicable, and not restrict the consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable rail projects.)

d. Rural Project

FRA will consider a project to be in a Rural Area if all or the majority of the project (determined by geographic location(s) where the majority of the project funds will be spent) is located in a Rural Area. However, in the event FRA elects to fund a component of the project, then FRA will reexamine whether the project is in a Rural Area.

**D. Application and Submission Information**

Required documents for the application are outlined in the following paragraphs. Applicants must complete and submit all components of the application. See Section

D(2) for the application checklist. FRA welcomes the submission of additional relevant supporting documentation, such as planning, engineering and design documentation, and letters of support from partnering organizations that will not count against the Project Narrative 25-page limit. Consistent with the R.O.U.T.E.S. Initiative, DOT encourages applicants to consider how the project will address the challenges faced by rural areas, generally.

### **1. Address to Request Application Package**

Applicants must submit all application materials in their entirety through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) no later than 5:00 p.m. ET, on [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. FRA reserves the right to modify this deadline. General information for submitting applications through Grants.gov can be found at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0270>.

For any supporting application materials that an applicant cannot submit via Grants.gov, such as oversized engineering drawings, an applicant may submit an original and two (2) copies to Ms. Frances Bourne, Office of Policy and Planning, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W38-207, Washington, DC 20590. Due to delays caused by enhanced screening of mail delivered via the U.S. Postal Service, FRA advises applicants to use other means of conveyance (such as courier service) to assure timely receipt of materials before the application deadline. Additionally, if documents can be obtained online, providing instructions to FRA on how to access files on a referenced website may also be sufficient.

### **2. Content and Form of Application Submission**

FRA strongly advises applicants to read this section carefully. Applicants must submit all required information and components of the application package to be considered for funding.

Required documents for an application package are outlined in the checklist below.

- i. Project Narrative (see D.2.a)
- ii. Statement of Work (see D.2.b.i)
- iii. Benefit-Cost Analysis (see D.2. b.ii)
- iv. SF424 – Application for Federal Assistance
- v. Either: SF 424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction projects  
(required for Tracks 1, 2 and 4) or SF 424C – Budget Information for  
Construction (required for any application that includes Track 3)
- vi. Either: SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction projects (required for  
Tracks 1, 2 and 4) or SF 424D – Assurances for Construction (required for  
any application that includes Track 3)
- vii. FRA’s Additional Assurances and Certifications
- viii. SF LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

a. Project Narrative

This section describes the minimum content required in the Project Narrative of the grant application. The Project Narrative must follow the basic outline below to address the program requirements and assist evaluators in locating relevant information.

I. Cover Page	See D.2.a.i
II. Project Summary	See D.2.a.ii

III. Project Funding	See D.2.a.iii
IV. Applicant Eligibility	See D.2.a.iv
V. Project Eligibility	See D.2.a.v
VI. Detailed Project Description	See D.2.a.vi
VII. Project Location	See D.2.a.vii
VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria	See D.2.a.viii
IX. Project Implementation and Management	See D.2.a.ix
X. Planning Readiness	See D.2.a.x
XI. Environmental Readiness	See D.2.a.xi

The above content must be provided in a narrative statement submitted by the applicant. The Project Narrative may not exceed 25 pages in length (excluding cover pages, table of contents, and supporting documentation). FRA will not review or consider Project Narratives beyond the 25-page limitation. If possible, applicants should submit supporting documents via website links rather than hard copies. If supporting documents are submitted, applicants must clearly identify the page number(s) of the relevant portion in the Project Narrative supporting documentation. The Project Narrative must adhere to the following outline.

- i. *Cover Page:* Include a cover page that lists the following elements in a table:

Project Title	
Applicant	
Project Track	1,2,3 and/or 4
Was a Federal grant application previously submitted for this project?	Yes/no

If yes, state the name of the Federal grant program and title of the project in the previous application.	Federal Grant Program:
	Project Title:
Is this a Rural Project? What percentage of the project cost is based in a Rural Area?	Yes/no Percentage of total project cost:
Is this a project eligible under 49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(2) that requires the acquisition of rights-of-way, track, or track structure to support the development of new intercity passenger rail service routes?	Yes/no
City(ies), State(s) where the project is located	
Urbanized Area where the project is located	
Population of Urbanized Area	
Is the project currently programmed in the: State rail plan, State Freight Plan, TIP, STIP, MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, State Long Range Transportation Plan?	Yes/no (If yes, please specify in which plans the project is currently programmed)

- ii. *Project Summary:* Provide a brief 4–6 sentence summary of the proposed project and what the project will entail. Include challenges the proposed project aims to address, and summarize the intended outcomes and anticipated benefits that will result from the proposed project.
- iii. *Project Funding:* Indicate in table format the amount of Federal funding requested, the proposed non-Federal match, identifying contributions from the private sector if applicable, and total project cost. Describe the non-Federal funding arrangement, including multiple sources of non-Federal funding if applicable. Include funding commitment letters outlining funding agreements, as attachments or in an appendix. If federal funding is proposed as match, demonstrate the applicant’s determination of eligibility for such use and the legal basis for that determination. Identify any

specific project components that the applicant proposes for partial project funding. If all or a majority of a project is located in a Rural Area, identify the Rural Area(s) and estimated percentage of project costs that will be spent in the Rural Area. Identify any previously incurred costs, as well as other sources of Federal funds committed to the project and any pending Federal requests. Also, note if the requested Federal funding under CRISI or other programs must be obligated or spent by a certain date due to dependencies or relationships with other Federal or non-Federal funding sources, related projects, law, or other factors. If applicable, provide the type and estimated value of any proposed in-kind contributions, and demonstrate how the in-kind contributions meet the requirements in 2 CFR 200.306.

*Example Project Funding Table:*

Task #	Task Name/Project Component	Cost	Percentage of Total Cost
1			
2			
Total Project Cost			
Federal Funds Received from Previous Grant			
CRISI Federal Funding Request			
Non-Federal Funding/Match		Cash: In-Kind:	
Portion of Non-Federal Funding from the Private Sector			
Portion of Total Project Costs Spent in a Rural Area			

Pending Federal Funding Requests		
----------------------------------	--	--

- iv. *Applicant Eligibility:* Explain how the applicant meets the applicant eligibility criteria outlined in Section C of this notice. For public agencies and publicly chartered authorities established by one or more states, the explanation must include citations to the applicable enabling legislation. If the applicant is eligible under 49 U.S.C. 22907(b)(8) as a Rail Carrier or rail equipment manufacturer in partnership with at least one of the other eligible entities, the applicant should explain the partnership and each entity's contribution to the partnership.
- v. *Project Eligibility:* Identify which project eligibility category the project is eligible under in Section C(3) of this notice, and explain how the project meets the project eligibility criteria.
- vi. *Detailed Project Description:* Include a detailed project description that expands upon the brief project summary. This detailed description should provide, at a minimum, background on the challenges the project aims to address; the expected users and beneficiaries of the project, including all railroad operators; the specific components and elements of the project; and any other information the applicant deems necessary to justify the proposed project. If applicable, explain how the project will benefit communities in Rural Areas. An applicant should specify whether it is seeking funding for a project that has already received Federal financial assistance, and if applicable, explain how the new scope proposed to be

funded under this NOFO relates to the previous scope. Consistent with DOT's R.O.U.T.E.S. Initiative (<https://www.transportation.gov/rural>), DOT encourages applicants to describe how activities proposed in their application would address the unique challenges facing rural transportation networks, regardless of the geographic location of those activities.

For all projects, applicants must provide information about proposed performance measures, as discussed in Section F(3)(c) and required in 2 CFR 200.301 and 49 U.S.C. 22907(f).

- (A) Grade crossing information, if applicable: For any project that includes grade crossing components, cite specific DOT National Grade Crossing Inventory information, including the railroad that owns the infrastructure (or the crossing owner, if different from the railroad), the primary railroad operator, the DOT crossing inventory number, and the roadway at the crossing. Applicants can search for data to meet this requirement at the following link:  
<http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/default.aspx>. In addition, if applicable, applicants must cite the page number in the grade crossing action plan where the grade crossing is referenced.
- (B) Heavily traveled rail corridor information, if applicable: For any project eligible under the eligibility category in Subsection C(3)(a)(iv), that reduces congestion and facilitates ridership growth

in Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation, describe how the project is located on a heavily traveled rail corridor.

(C) PTC information, if applicable: For any project that includes deploying PTC systems, applicants must:

1. Document submission of a revised Positive Train Control Implementation Plan (PTCIP) to FRA as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a);
2. Document that it is a tenant on one or more host railroads that submitted a revised PTCIP to FRA as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a), which states the tenant railroad is equipping its rolling stock with a PTC system and provides all other information required under 49 CFR 236.1011 regarding the tenant railroad; or
3. Document why the applicant is not required to submit a revised PTCIP as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a), and whether the proposed project will assist in the deployment (i.e., installation and/or full implementation) of a PTC system required under 49 U.S.C. 20157.

(D) Workforce development and training information, if applicable: For any project that includes workforce development, applicants must document to the extent practicable similar existing local training programs supported by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Labor, and/or the Department of Education.

- vii. *Project Location:* Include geospatial data for the project, as well as a map of the project's location. On the map, include the Congressional districts and Rural Area boundaries, if applicable, in which the project will take place.
- viii. *Evaluation and Selection Criteria:* Include a thorough discussion of how the proposed project meets all the evaluation criteria and selection criteria, as outlined in Section E of this notice. If an application does not sufficiently address the evaluation and selection criteria, it is unlikely to be a competitive application. For the life-cycle cost selection criteria, applicants should demonstrate a credible plan to maintain their asset without having to rely on Federal funding including a description of the applicants' approach to ensuring operations and maintenance will not be underfunded in future years. For projects (other than those projects for the implementation of positive train control systems otherwise eligible under 49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(1)) that are on a shared corridor with Commuter Railroad Passenger Transportation, demonstrate how funding the proposed project would be a reasonable investment in Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation and/or freight rail transportation.
- ix. *Project Implementation and Management:* Describe proposed project implementation and project management arrangements. Include descriptions of the expected arrangements for project contracting, contract oversight, change-order management, risk management, and conformance to Federal requirements for project progress reporting (see

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0274>). Describe past experience in managing and overseeing similar projects.

- x. *Planning Readiness for Tracks 2 and 3 (PE/NEPA and FD/Construction Projects):* Provide information about the planning process that analyzed the investment needs and service objectives of the project. If applicable, cite sources of this information from a service development plan, State or regional rail plan, or similar planning document where the project has been identified for solving a specific existing transportation problem, and makes the case for investing in the proposed solution.
- xi. *Environmental Readiness for Track 3 FD/Construction Projects:* If the NEPA process is complete, an applicant should indicate the date of completion, and provide a website link or other reference to the documents demonstrating compliance with NEPA, which might include a final CE determination, Finding of No Significant Impact, or Record of Decision. If the NEPA process is not yet underway or is underway, but is not complete, the application should detail the type of NEPA review underway, where the project is in the process, and indicate the anticipated date of completion of all NEPA and related milestones. If the last agency action with respect to NEPA documents occurred more than three years before the application date, the applicant should describe why the project has been delayed and include a proposed approach for verifying, and if necessary, updating this information in accordance with applicable NEPA requirements.

b. Additional Application Elements

Applicants must submit:

- i. A Statement of Work (SOW) addressing the scope, schedule, and budget for the proposed project if it were selected for award. The SOW must contain sufficient detail so FRA, and the applicant, can understand the expected outcomes of the proposed work to be performed and monitor progress toward completing project tasks and deliverables during a prospective grant's period of performance. Applicants must use FRA's standard SOW, schedule, and budget templates to be considered for award. The templates are located at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0325>.  
When preparing the budget, the total cost of a project must be based on the best available information as indicated in cited references that include engineering studies, studies of economic feasibility, environmental analyses, and information on the expected use of equipment or facilities.
- ii. A Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA), as an appendix to the Project Narrative for each project submitted by an applicant. The BCA must demonstrate in economic terms the merits of investing in the proposed project. The BCA for Track 2 – PE/NEPA projects should be for the underlying project, not the PE/NEPA work itself. The project narrative should summarize the project's benefits.

Benefits may apply to existing and new rail users, as well as users of other modes of transportation. In some cases, benefits may be applied to populations in the general vicinity of the project area. Improvements to

multimodal connections and shared-use rail corridors may benefit all users involved. Benefits may be quantified for savings in safety costs, reduced costs from disruption of service, maintenance costs, reduced travel time, emissions reductions, and increases in capacity or ability to offer new types of freight or passenger services. Applicants may also describe other categories of benefits that are difficult to quantify such as noise reduction, environmental impact mitigation, improved quality of life, or reliability of travel times. All benefits claimed for the project must be clearly tied to the expected outcomes of the project. Please refer to the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs prior to preparing a BCA at <https://www.transportation.gov/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>. In addition, please also refer to the BCA FAQs on FRA's website for some rail specific examples of how to apply the BCA Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs to CRISI applications.

For Tracks 1 and 4 – Applicants are required to document project benefits. Any subjective estimates of benefits and costs should be quantified whenever possible, and applicants should provide appropriate evidence to support their subjective estimates. Estimates of benefits should be presented in monetary terms whenever possible; if a monetary estimate is not possible, then a quantitative estimate (in physical, non-monetary terms, such as crash or employee casualty rates, ridership estimates,

emissions levels, energy efficiency improvements, etc.) should be provided. At a minimum, qualitatively describe the project benefits.

- iii. Environmental compliance documentation, as applicable, if a website link is not cited in the Project Narrative.
- iv. SF 424 – Application for Federal Assistance;
- v. SF 424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction or SF 424C – Budget Information for Construction;
- vi. SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction or SF 424D – Assurances for Construction;
- vii. FRA’s Additional Assurances and Certifications; and
- viii. SF LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.
- ix. A statement that the lead applicant has a system for procuring property and services under a Federal award under this NOFO that supports the provisions in 2 CFR 200 Subpart D-Procurement Standards at 2 CFR 200.317-326 and 2 CFR 1201.317.
- x. A statement indicating whether the applicant or any of its principals:
  - a. is presently suspended, debarred, voluntarily excluded, or disqualified;
  - b. has been convicted within the preceding 3 years of any of the offenses listed in 2 CFR 180.800(a); or had a civil judgment rendered against the organization or the individual for one of those offenses within that time period;
  - c. is presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or

civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, state or local) with, commission of any of the offenses listed in 2 CFR 180.800(a); or,

- d. has had one or more public transactions (Federal, state, or local) terminated within the preceding 3 years for cause or default (including material failure to comply).

Forms needed for the electronic application process are at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov).

c. Post-Selection Requirements

See subsection F(2) of this notice for post-selection requirements.

**3. Unique Entity Identifier, System for Award Management (SAM), and Submission Instructions**

To apply for funding through Grants.gov, applicants must be properly registered in SAM before submitting an application, provide a valid unique entity identifier, and continue to maintain an active SAM registration all as described in detail below.

Complete instructions on how to register and submit an application can be found at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it can take up to several weeks for first-time registrants to receive confirmation and a user password. FRA recommends that applicants start the registration process as early as possible to prevent delays that may preclude submitting an application package by the application deadline. Applications will not be accepted after the due date. Delayed registration is not an acceptable justification for an application extension.

FRA may not make a grant award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and SAM requirements,

and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. (Please note that if a Dun & Bradstreet DUNS number must be obtained or renewed, this may take a significant amount of time to complete.) Late applications that are the result of a failure to register or comply with Grants.gov applicant requirements in a timely manner will not be considered. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the submission deadline, the application will not be considered. To submit an application through Grants.gov, applicants must:

*a. Obtain a DUNS number.*

A DUNS number is required for Grants.gov registration. The Office of Management and Budget requires that all businesses and nonprofit applicants for Federal funds include a DUNS number in their applications for a new award or renewal of an existing award. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for the government in identifying and keeping track of entities receiving Federal funds. The identifier is used for tracking purposes and to validate address and point of contact information for Federal assistance applicants, recipients, and subrecipients. The DUNS number will be used throughout the grant life cycle. Obtaining a DUNS number is a free, one-time activity. Applicants may obtain a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 or by applying online at <http://www.dnb.com/us>.

*b. Register with the SAM at [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov).*

All applicants for Federal financial assistance must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. An applicant must be registered in SAM to successfully register in Grants.gov. The SAM database is the repository for standard information about Federal financial assistance applicants, recipients, and subrecipients. Organizations that have previously submitted applications via Grants.gov are already registered with SAM, as it is a requirement for Grants.gov registration. Please note, however, that applicants must update or renew their SAM registration at least once per year to maintain an active status. Therefore, it is critical to check registration status well in advance of the application deadline. If an applicant is selected for an award, the applicant must maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the period of the award. Information about SAM registration procedures is available at [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov).

*c. Create a Grants.gov username and password.*

Applicants must complete an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) profile on [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) and create a username and password. Applicants must use the organization's DUNS number to complete this step. Additional information about the registration process is available at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

*d. Acquire Authorization for your AOR from the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC).*

The E-Biz POC at the applicant's organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) to authorize the applicant as the AOR. Please note there can be more than one AOR for an organization.

*e. Submit an Application Addressing All Requirements Outlined in this NOFO.*

If an applicant experiences difficulties at any point during this process, please call the Grants.gov Customer Center Hotline at 1-800-518-4726, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed on Federal holidays). For information and instructions on each of these processes, please see instructions at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

Note: Please use generally accepted formats such as .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx and .ppt, when uploading attachments. While applicants may embed picture files, such as .jpg, .gif, and .bmp, in document files, applicants should not submit attachments in these formats. Additionally, the following formats will not be accepted: .com, .bat, .exe, .vbs, .cfg, .dat, .db, .dbf, .dll, .ini, .log, .ora, .sys, and .zip.

#### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

Applicants must submit complete applications to [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) no later than 5:00 p.m. ET, [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. FRA reviews [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) information on the dates and times of applications submitted to determine timeliness of submissions. Late applications will be neither reviewed nor considered. Delayed registration is not an acceptable reason for late submission. To apply for funding under this announcement, all applicants are expected to be registered as an organization with Grants.gov. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply early to ensure all materials are received before this deadline.

To ensure a fair competition of limited discretionary funds, the following conditions are not valid reasons to permit late submissions: (1) failure to complete the Grants.gov registration process before the deadline; (2) failure to follow Grants.gov instructions on how to register and apply as posted on its website; (3) failure to follow all

instructions in this NOFO; and (4) technical issues experienced with the applicant's computer or information technology environment.

## **5. Intergovernmental Review**

Executive Order 12372 requires applicants from state and local units of government or other organizations providing services within a state to submit a copy of the application to the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC), if one exists, and if this program has been selected for review by the state. Applicants may contact their State SPOC to determine if the program has been selected for state review. Intergovernmental Review is not required for this program.

## **6. Funding Restrictions**

FRA is prohibited under 49 U.S.C. 22905(f) from providing CRISI grants for commuter rail passenger transportation (as defined in 49 U.S.C. 24102(3)). FRA's interpretation of this restriction is informed by the language in 49 U.S.C. 22907. FRA's primary intent in funding passenger rail projects is to make reasonable investments in Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation. Such projects may be located on shared corridors where Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation and/or freight rail also benefit from the project. The 2020 Appropriation makes an exception to this funding restriction for Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation projects for the implementation of positive train control systems.

Consistent with 2 CFR 200.458, as applicable, FRA will only approve pre-award costs if such costs are incurred pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the grant agreement and if such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Under 2 CFR 200.458, grant recipients must seek written approval from

the administering agency for pre-award activities to be eligible for reimbursement under the grant. Activities initiated prior to the execution of a grant or without written approval may be ineligible for reimbursement or matching contribution. Cost sharing or matching may be used only for authorized Federal award purposes.

## **7. Other Submission Requirements**

If an applicant experiences difficulties at any point during this process, please call the Grants.gov Customer Center Hotline at 1-800-518-4726, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed on Federal holidays). For information and instructions on each of these processes, please see instructions at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>.

## **E. Application Review Information**

### **1. Criteria**

#### **a. Eligibility, Completeness and Applicant Risk Review**

FRA will first screen each application for applicant and project eligibility (eligibility requirements are outlined in Section C of this notice), completeness (application documentation and submission requirements are outlined in Section D of this notice), and the 20 percent minimum match.

FRA will then consider applicant risk, including the applicant's past performance in developing and delivering similar projects and previous financial contributions, and if applicable, previous competitive grant technical evaluation ratings that the proposed project received under previous competitive grant programs administered by DOT.

Rural transportation networks play a vital role in supporting our national economic vitality. Addressing the deteriorating conditions and disproportionately high fatality rates

on our rural transportation infrastructure is of critical interest to DOT, as rural transportation networks face unique challenges in safety, infrastructure condition, and passenger and freight usage. Consistent with the R.O.U.T.E.S. Initiative, DOT will consider how the project will address the challenges faced by rural areas.

b. Evaluation Criteria

FRA will evaluate all eligible and complete applications using the evaluation criteria outlined in this section to determine project benefits and technical merit.

i. Project Benefits:

FRA will evaluate the Benefit-Cost Analysis of the proposed project for the anticipated private and public benefits relative to the costs of the proposed project and the summary of benefits provided in response to subsection D(2)(b)(ii) including—

- (A) Effects on system and service performance;
- (B) Effects on safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience;
- (C) Efficiencies from improved integration with other modes; and
- (D) Ability to meet existing or anticipated demand.

ii. Technical Merit:

FRA will evaluate application information for the degree to which—

- (A) The tasks and subtasks outlined in the SOW are appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes of the proposed project.
- (B) Applications indicate strong project readiness and meet requirements under the project track(s) designated by the applicant.

- (C) The technical qualifications and experience of key personnel proposed to lead and perform the technical efforts, and the qualifications of the primary and supporting organizations to fully and successfully execute the proposed project within the proposed timeframe and budget are demonstrated.
- (D) The proposed project's business plan considers potential private sector participation in the financing, construction, or operation of the proposed project.
- (E) The applicant has, or will have the legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project; satisfactory continuing control over the use of the equipment or facilities; and the capability and willingness to maintain the equipment or facilities.
- (F) The proposed project is consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by DOT, including those required by law or State rail plans developed under Title 49, United State Code, Chapter 227.

c. Selection Criteria

In addition to the eligibility and completeness review and the evaluation criteria outlined in this subsection, the FRA will apply the following selection criteria:

- i. The FRA will give preference to projects for which the:
  - (A) Proposed Federal share of total project costs is 50 percent or less;

- (B) Proposed non-Federal share is comprised of more than one source, including private sources, demonstrating broad participation by affected stakeholders; and
  - (C) Net benefits of the grant funds will be maximized considering the Benefit-Cost Analysis, including anticipated private and public benefits relative to the costs of the proposed project, and factoring in the other considerations in 49 U.S.C. 22907 (e).
- ii. After applying the above preferences, the FRA will take into account the following key DOT objectives:
  - (A) Supporting economic vitality at the national and regional level;
  - (B) Leveraging Federal funding to attract other, non-Federal sources of infrastructure investment;
  - (C) Preparing for future operations and maintenance costs associated with their project's life-cycle, as demonstrated by a credible plan to maintain assets without having to rely on future Federal funding;
  - (D) Using innovative approaches to improve safety and expedite project delivery; and,
  - (E) Holding grant recipients accountable for their performance and achieving specific, measurable outcomes identified by grant applicants.
- iii. In determining the allocation of program funds, FRA may also consider geographic diversity, diversity in the size of the systems receiving funding, the applicant's receipt of other competitive awards, and projects

located in or that support transportation service in a qualified opportunity zone designated pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 1400Z-1.

iv. Consistent with DOT's R.O.U.T.E.S. Initiative

(<https://www.transportation.gov/rural>), DOT recognizes that rural transportation networks face unique challenges. To the extent that those challenges are reflected in the merit criteria listed in this section, DOT will consider how the activities proposed in the application will address those challenges, regardless of the geographic location of those activities.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

FRA will conduct a four-part application review process, as follows:

- a. Screen applications for completeness and eligibility and consider applicable past performance and previous financial contributions and technical evaluation ratings;
- b. Evaluate eligible applications (completed by technical panels applying the evaluation criteria);
- c. Review, apply selection criteria and recommend initial selection of projects for the FRA Administrator's review (completed by a non-career Senior Review Team, which includes senior leadership from the Office of the Secretary and FRA); and,
- d. Selection of awards for the Secretary's review and approval (completed by the FRA Administrator).

## **3. Reporting Matters Related to Integrity and Performance**

Before making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold of \$150,000 (see 2 CFR 200.88 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), FRA will review and consider any information about the

applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)). See 41 U.S.C. 2313.

An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

FRA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

### **1. Federal Award Notice**

FRA will announce applications selected for funding in a press release and on the FRA website after the application review period. This announcement is FRA's notification to successful and unsuccessful applicants alike. FRA will contact applicants with successful applications after announcement with information and instructions about the award process. This notification is not an authorization to begin proposed project activities. FRA requires satisfaction of applicable requirements by the applicant and a formal agreement signed by both the grantee and the FRA, including an approved scope, schedule, and budget, before obligating the grant.

For Track 2 PE/NEPA projects, these requirements may include transportation planning. For Track 3 FD/Construction projects, these requirements may include transportation planning, PE and environmental reviews. See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L05285>. This template is subject to revision.

## **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

In connection with any program or activity conducted with or benefiting from funds awarded under this notice, grantees must comply with all applicable requirements of Federal law, including, without limitation, the Constitution of the United States; the conditions of performance, nondiscrimination requirements, and other assurances made applicable to the award of funds in accordance with regulations of the Department of Transportation; and applicable Federal financial assistance and contracting principles promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget. In complying with these requirements, grantees, in particular, must ensure that no concession agreements are denied or other contracting decisions made on the basis of speech or other activities protected by the First Amendment. If the Department determines that a grantee has failed to comply with applicable Federal requirements, the Department may terminate the award of funds and disallow previously incurred costs, requiring the grantee to reimburse any expended award funds.

Examples of administrative and national policy requirements include: 2 CFR Part 200; procurement standards at 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart D – Procurement Standards, 2 CFR 1207.317 and 2 CFR 200.401; compliance with Federal civil rights laws and regulations; requirements for disadvantaged business enterprises, debarment and

suspension requirements, and drug-free workplace requirements; FRA's and OMB's Assurances and Certifications; Americans with Disabilities Act; safety requirements; NEPA; environmental justice requirements; performance measures under 49 U.S.C. 22907(f); grant conditions under 49 U.S.C. 22905, including the Buy America requirements, the provision deeming operators rail carriers for certain purposes and grantee agreements with railroad right-of-way owners for projects using railroad right-of way. Unless otherwise stated in statutory or legislative authority, or appropriations language, all financial assistance awards follow the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1201.

Grantees must comply with applicable appropriations act requirements and all relevant requirements of 2 CFR part 200. Rights to intangible property under grants awarded under this NOFO are governed in accordance with 2 CFR 200.315. For research awards, unless otherwise stated in the Federal award, FRA will not consider non-federal entities as that term is used in 2 CFR Part 200 to include for-profit entities. See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057> and clauses specific to CRISI funding at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L20078>. These templates are subject to revision.

Projects selected under this NOFO for Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation for positive train control projects may be transferred to the Federal Transit Administration for grant administration at the Secretary's discretion. If such a project is transferred to the Federal Transit Administration, applicants will be required to comply with chapter 53 of Title 49 of the United States Code.

### **3. Reporting**

#### **a. Progress Reporting on Grant Activity**

Each applicant selected for a grant will be required to comply with all standard FRA reporting requirements, including quarterly progress reports, quarterly Federal financial reports, and interim and final performance reports, as well as all applicable auditing, monitoring and close out requirements. Reports may be submitted electronically.

#### **b. Additional Reporting**

Applicants selected for funding are required to comply with all reporting requirements in the standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards including 2 CFR 180.335 and 2 CFR 180.350. See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057>.

If the Federal share of any Federal award under this NOFO may include more than \$500,000 over the period of performance, applicants are informed of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR Part 200, Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

#### **c. Performance Reporting**

Each applicant selected for funding must collect information and report on the project's performance using measures mutually agreed upon by FRA and the grantee to assess progress in achieving strategic goals and objectives. Examples of some rail performance measures are listed in the table below. The applicable measure(s) will depend upon the type of project. Applicants requesting funding for the acquisition of

rolling stock must integrate at least one equipment/rolling stock performance measure, consistent with the grantee's application materials and program goals.

<b>Rail Measures</b>	<b>Unit Measured</b>	<b>Temporal</b>	<b>Primary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Secondary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Slow Order Miles</b>	Miles	Annual	State of Good Repair	Safety	The number of miles per year within the project area that have temporary speed restrictions ("slow orders") imposed due to track condition. This is an indicator of the overall condition of track. This measure can be used for projects to rehabilitate sections of a rail line since the rehabilitation should eliminate, or at least reduce the slow orders upon project completion.
<b>Gross Ton</b>	Gross Tons	Annual	Economic Competitiveness	State of Good Repair	The annual gross tonnage of freight shipped in the project area. Gross tons include freight cargo minus tare weight of the rail cars. This measures the volume of freight a railroad ships in a year. This measure can be useful for projects that are anticipated to increase freight shipments.
<b>Rail Track Grade Separation</b>	Count	Annual	Economic Competitiveness	Safety	The number of annual automobile crossings that are

<b>Rail Measures</b>	<b>Unit Measured</b>	<b>Temporal</b>	<b>Primary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Secondary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>
					eliminated at an at-grade crossing as a result of a new grade separation.
<b>Passenger Counts</b>	Count	Annual	Economic Competitiveness	State of Good Repair	Count of the annual passenger boardings and alightings at stations within the project area.
<b>Travel Time</b>	Time/Trip	Annual	Economic Competitiveness	Quality of Life	Point-to-point travel times between pre-determined station stops within the project area. This measure demonstrates how track improvements and other upgrades improve operations on a rail line. It also helps make sure the railroad is maintaining the line after project completion.
<b>Track weight capacity</b>	Yes/No	One Time	State of Good Repair	Economic Competitiveness	If a project is upgrading a line to accommodate heavier rail cars (typically an increase from 263,000 lb. rail cars to 286,000 lb. rail cars.)
<b>Track Miles</b>	Miles	One Time	State of Good Repair	Economic Competitiveness	The number of track miles that exist within the project area. This measure can be beneficial for projects building sidings or sections of additional main

<b>Rail Measures</b>	<b>Unit Measured</b>	<b>Temporal</b>	<b>Primary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Secondary Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>
					line track on a railroad.

### **G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

For further information regarding this notice and the grants program, please contact Ms. Frances Bourne, Office of Policy and Planning, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Room W38-207, Washington, DC 20590; email: frances.bourne@dot.gov; phone: 202-493-6366.

### **H. Other Information**

All information submitted as part of or in support of any application shall use publicly available data or data that can be made public and methodologies that are accepted by industry practice and standards, to the extent possible. If the application includes information the applicant considers to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, the applicant should do the following: (1) Note on the front cover that the submission “Contains Confidential Business Information (CBI)”; (2) mark each affected page “CBI”; and (3) highlight or otherwise denote the CBI portions.

The DOT regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 49 CFR Part 7 Subpart C – Availability of Reasonably Described Records under the Freedom of Information Act which sets forth rules for FRA to make requested materials, information and, records publicly available under FOIA. Unless prohibited by law and to

the extent permitted under the FOIA, contents of application and proposals submitted by successful applicants may be released in response to FOIA requests.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on April 14, 2020.

---

Quintin Kendall,

*Deputy Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 2020-08226 Filed: 4/17/2020 8:45 am; Publication Date: 4/20/2020]